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Chasing a Passion: Naval Medical Research Center Researcher Participates in Annual Boston Marathon

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Lt. Joshua Swift, researcher, Operational Undersea Medicine Directorate, Naval Medical Research Center, ran the 2017 Boston Marathon, April 17.

SILVER SPRING, Md. – “I trained for almost three years to improve my time and qualify for the Boston Marathon,” said Lt. Joshua Swift, researcher, Operational Undersea Medicine Directorate (OUMD), Naval Medical Research Center (NMRC). Swift ran the 2017 Boston Marathon April 17, and completed the 26.2 mile run in 3:31:34.

The Boston Marathon is an annual marathon hosted by several cities in the greater Boston, Massachusetts area. Established in 1897, the Boston Marathon is the world’s oldest annual marathon and ranks as one of the world’s best known racing events, according to the Boston Athletic Association. The marathon has a deep, rich, history and is known to be a very competitive event.

“The Boston marathon is the most prestigious marathon in the world, it is the race that all marathoners aim to qualify for and participate in,” said Swift. In preparation for the marathon,

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Swift typically ran 5-6 days a week, and tried to get at least one long run in each week. “Running gives me a euphoric and peaceful feeling that can’t be matched,” said Swift. He continued, “It’s difficult to describe, but it becomes a form of addiction that you constantly chase.”

While Swift aims for his best in every race, for him, this race was a little different. “Coming off of an injury during a race last November, I decided I wanted to run a nice steady pace and enjoy the experience of it all,” said Swift.

“This particular marathon is an emotional journey, and throughout the journey you see numerous instances of human compassion, bravery, and joy. Running alongside single and double amputees who lost limbs in combat, survivors of the marathon bombing in 2013, family members running in honor of fallen service members, and other courageous individuals is a humbling experience,” added Swift.

While Swift chases his cardio dreams outside, some of his best work comes from the laboratory. As a researcher for OUMD, Swift is currently researching cardiopulmonary and exercise performance at high altitude, which could have a huge impact on the Warfighter by eliminating the need for altitude acclimatization or the need to carry supplemental oxygen.

“Understanding the human body and mind has had a great impact on my performance as a marathon runner,” said Swift. When asked to give advice to future marathon runners, he said “for anyone who thinks running a marathon is a task too difficult to undertake, you’re selling yourself short. A marathon is a constant battle of your mind against your body. You have to be willing to overcome your mind and push through to the finish.”

The Boston Marathon may feature the world's greatest marathon runners, but it is the stories of the heroic individuals who overcome so much to participate and finish the race that make it special.

“I am very proud to be a part of Boston and its legacy,” said Swift.

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